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13 March 1968

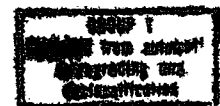
MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT : Comments on Major Brown's Memorandum for Major General
De Puy on the Subject of Current Intelligence Estimates
of Logistic Support to VC/NVA Forces in South Vietnam

1. The burden of Major Brown's memorandum is that current intelligence estimates of logistic support for VC/NVA forces in South Vietnam are inaccurate, mainly because these estimates have been established on what he terms as questionable assumptions, as well as a lack of hard information, and a lack of timeliness in the data base. To reach these conclusions, Major Brown has taken certain liberties with recent OER studies; taking much of the information out of its original context and presenting misleading comparisons of data in support of his argument.

2. On page 2 of his memorandum Major Brown speaks of "estimates which may present a deceptive picture of VC/NVA operational capabilities due to a persuasive tendency to equate capabilities with requirements." OER, to my recollection, has never equated requirements and capabilities; it has, however consistently acknowledged the capability of Communist forces to transport supplies in excess of prevailing combat requirements in South Vietnam. Major Brown contends the estimate lacks hard information - but concedes that much of the data base consists of detainee/rallier interrogation reports, captured documents, technical intelligence examination of captured material, and review of US/FWMP operational after-action reports and admits further that from this data valid TOE, basic load, and day of combat expenditures rates were developed.

3. Major Brown alludes to questionable assumptions but he does not elaborate on these assumptions. He suggests that the data lacks timeliness and supports his point of view by comparing the 11 ton daily 1967 Communist ammo requirement with recent Communist ammunition expenditures of about 7.5 tons a day along Marine outposts in I Corps during a recent 10 day period in February. OER has never claimed that the 11 ton daily

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requirement in 1967 applied during the Tet Offensive. In fact, preliminary findings of a recent OER study on Tet ammunition expenditures shows consumption to be considerably higher than the 11 ton requirement, and expenditures in I Corps to be fairly consistent with the 7.5 ton daily expenditure rate cited in the Brown Memorandum. On the other hand, prior to Tet, there was no conspicuous increase in ammunition expenditures; an increase which would invalidate the NIE 14.3-67 estimate. This brings up the question of the timeliness of the data used in our estimate. The methodology, used in the NIE was agreed upon at the Saigon Logistics conference in May 1967. Much of the data used in the estimate, however, was based on research undertaken after the conclusion of the conference. Heavy weapons ammunition expenditures, for example, were reviewed by Corps area, by month for the period January thru September 1967 and the findings were incorporated into the estimate. Likewise much of the data on Class II, and IV supply items, enemy material losses, and combat operations, dating from the conclusion of the conference, were used in the estimate.

Major Brown exaggerates the problem relating to the lack of information on VC/NVA stockpiling practices. Stockpiling is an integral part of any study on logistics, but available information on this subject showed no rigid VC doctrine on stockpiling. Exploitation of captured document and interrogation reports show varying stockpile levels maintained by Communist forces ranging from 7 to 90 days supply levels.

Sufficient data was available to determine the percent of some out of country Class II and IV supply requirements. This estimate was really a synthesis of data based on analysis of captured enemy war material and factors derived from FM 101-10. Allowance was made in the estimate for weapons replacement and reequipping. Given the combat levels during the Tet Offensive, both weapons replacement and reequipping factors should be reexamined. However, again, intensified Communist during the Tet Offensive should not be used as to invalidate an estimate which applied to an entirely different level of combat in 1967.

OER is continuing its efforts to refine the data used in estimates of logistical requirements. Whereas we can find little agreement with Major Brown's findings, we can at least support his call for a more intensive collection and analysis effort. Major Brown concedes that the logistic effort is enormously complex. As a minimum it requires continuing and extensive exploitation of documents and reports for data on order of battle, combat operations, food supplies and losses, the quantities, origin,

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and types of weapons and other technical supply items used, replacement factors, variations in ammunition basic load, and expenditures by unit and by geographic area, material losses inflicted in ground and air attacks, and stockpiling practices, not only for South Vietnam but for Laos and North Vietnam as well. Given the immense resources of the intelligence community a more systematic and comprehensive review and analysis of Communist logistical operations would seem entirely feasible and desirable at this time.

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Chief, Logistics Branch

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